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# ***Christian Art in Asia***

**REPORT OF A  
CONSULTATION HELD AT  
DHYANA PURA, BALI, INDONESIA  
AUGUST 24-30, 1978**

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*Top: Indonesian painter Sudjojono explains his painting to Conference Moderator Dr. Masao Takenaka.*

*Below: Japanese printmaker Sadao Watanabe stands in front of his print of the Lord's Supper.*

# Introduction

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At the Penang Assembly of the Christian Conference of Asia in 1977 delegates urged that cultural questions related to Asian Christianity should be taken more seriously. One of the ways in which this was to be done was through programmes of music, song, drama, art and sculpture.

The first of a series of consultations was held at Dhyana Pura in Bali, Indonesia, August 24–30, 1978. The theme was "The Lord's Prayer in Asia Today" and it brought together people involved with such art as painting, sculpture, wood-carving, flower arrangement, sand painting and similar visual arts. Most of the forty-three persons present were practising artists, but there were also three theologians with a special interest in art.

Several continuing programmes emerged from this Consultation, including the formation of an Association of Christian Artists in Asia, the establishment of a permanent exhibition of Christian art to tour Asian cities, and the publication of a book of art and meditations on the Lord's Prayer.

The number of addresses at the Consultation was strictly limited, because this was to be a working meeting of artists. The papers presented are included in this booklet, together with the final resolution and a list of the participants.

*R.M. O'Grady*



*Top: Australian Aboriginal artist Gaumana.*

*Centre: Indian "painter" in sand Airan.*

*Below: Napi Waaka, New Zealand Maori woodcarver.*

## Christian Art and People's Struggle

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In the earlier part of this year the Preparatory Committee of this "Consultation on Christian Art in Asia" met in Hong Kong to consider the participants, programme and theme. All agreed that the theme should be "The Lord's Prayer Today in Asia". The last part is very important. Not an abstract form – but the Lord's Prayer *Today in Asia*.

There are several reasons why this is a good theme. We can perceive four dimensions to it. Firstly, it is a very universal prayer. If you go to the kindergarten or nursery school or Christian secondary school every child will be reciting the Lord's Prayer. Also older men and women. Symbolically it cuts across all the national, linguistic, social differences – it is a universal binding together of the community of God's people. In the Lord's Prayer there is no East or West, or South or North. But also in those of you who are artists there is no East or West. East and West is a very arbitrary thing. In the churches we were first called the East Asia Christian Conference; now we are called the Christian Conference of Asia. East is too arbitrary. In Japan we are sometimes called the Far East – to whom are we near, to whom are we far away? It is a British way to think that we are far or we are near. In Korea they could think Japan is the near East, Hawaii the middle East, and people living in London or Geneva the far East. It depends on how we look at it. In the realm of the kingdom of beauty there is no East or West, no North or South. To be sure, there is a distinctive colour, distinctive line, distinctive form which underlies each culture. There is a uniqueness. But let us be very clear: across all our differences this prayer unites us. The Lord's prayer is a very universal prayer.

Secondly, this is a very existential prayer. It is the prayer of the very hungry person who will pray existentially "Give me this day. I am physically hungry today, I am thirsty, I must have some food for my family". This is prayer. This is the existential, concrete reality of Asia in which two-thirds of our people are praying day and night. This is the reality of the Lord's prayer here in Asia today.

The night before I came here I visited the home of our honourable friend Bagong Kussudiardja, the noted Indonesian dance master and batik painter. In the study beside his home I saw a dark painting. It was a dark evening, but the painting was still darker. There in the left upper corner of the painting something was emerging, a dim light just beginning to shine within the groaning, struggling feeling of darkness. Bagong indicated that it was his response to "Give us our daily rice" in the Indonesian scene. Hungry man, starving man, waiting for the dawn of morning to come; hungry night – thirsty, hungry, waiting for the dawn of the new rice to come. It is a small painting, but it is the Lord's Prayer in Asia today. To be sure, we should not idolise any goods, even rice; we should not adore this material; but God, in giving the reality gives bread/rice/ragi to all people so that we can have a healthy life together. So we can pray as one, "give us this day our daily rice".

Thirdly, this prayer is a corporate prayer. Here in community we are praying together. But the subject is not *me*. In the process of adaptation of Christianity in the West it became a very individualistic religion. The Lord's prayer is not saying "Give *me* this day *my* daily bread". No, it says "Give *us* our daily bread, (rice/ragi)". This is a corporate prayer.

St Paul reminded us "Don't you know that you are eating the Lord's Supper? But you are not celebrating properly because some of you are coming too early, eating too much and having too much drink so that you are drunk. All the time the slaves of your household are doing the chores and have nothing to eat while others are eating abundantly." Paul is reminding us that life is a sharing.

All of the Lord's prayer points to community. "Forgive our sins, as we forgive our debtors" is a horizontal relationship

in which we accept Christ's gift of forgiveness. The prayer continues "lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil". The distinction between sin and evil is a very important one. Sin is more personal — committed by one's own decision, or by alienating oneself from a proper relationship with God and with neighbour. But evil can be demonic forces and not just a personal responsibility. Famine is an evil; how do you control famine or a disaster like a typhoon? How do you control a structured evil? It is beyond personal relationships. It jeopardises the basic structure of a city or a village by natural, social or political disaster. Today we are living within the inter-action of demonic forces in which Christians are asked to pray "Deliver us from evil".

Fourthly and finally, this prayer is also a God-centred prayer. It is not only expressing our own desires and aspirations, but starts from "Thy will be done. Thy kingdom come. Hallowed be Thy name". From the beginning this is God-centred. Not our anxieties, not our own selfish will to be done, but God's will to be done. We pray for His will to be done through us. We are simple vessels or channels through which God's will can be manifested.

The prayer ends "Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory". It is a humble prayer. No sense of arrogance or pride of technology or pride of artistic gift. In a humble way we render this offering to God to use us freely for the glory of His kingdom. And I think this is the profound meaning of the gift of being an artist. It is the artists' temptation to use their gift for their own glory, or the sanctification of a particular group. Instead, we must use the gift we are given so that God's will may be done on earth as it is in heaven.

In the thirteenth century of the Reformation period of Japanese Buddhism there was a man called Shindan who started the Shin sect in Mahayana Buddhism. He was similar to Martin Luther, the reformer. Shindan once asked "Who will be saved?" In that time those who were saved were the people who had the purified monastic life of the Buddhist priesthood. By their earnest reciting of the Sutra and their disciplined life in the seclusion of the monastery they were the people who were saved. Not the ordinary people who were living an evil life. But Shindan said

"No, no. If the good people like priests and monks are saved, then why not sinners also by the mercy of Buddha?" And that is the very power of which the reformer Martin Luther spoke. Justification by faith, for the ordinary people.

This is also true in the realm of the kingdom of beauty. Sometimes I find an inexplicable beauty in the ordinary folk art of the rural villages of Taiwan or Okinawa. Simple, innocent, but solid beauty. Korean folk art pottery, for instance, coming out of the soil of Korea. I am sure Christ blesses this as well as the statues of the kings or the rich people in high positions. The glory of Solomon will not exceed the little nameless flower in the field.

So let us meditate together on this meaning of the Lord's prayer in four dimensions. Artists have a specific task — I would say a prophetic task — to point out the reality of justice and peace. Let us pray together that the Lord's prayer in Asia may become truly our prayer, so that our humble talents may be used for God's purpose. Amen.

## Christian Symbolism in The Asia Context

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The basic aim of our consultation could be summed up in some words of Sadhu Sundar Singh. That great Indian Christian venturer in the spirit once said that he wanted “to bring the water of life in an Asian cup”.

“The water of Life” — sparkling and clear, life-restoring and powerful, brought to the lips of people in the villages, cities, and nations of Asia where they are, “in an Asian cup”. A beautiful and unforgettable image. We take up this image in the context of art (and more specifically of religious and Christian art). How can we bring Christian imagery and symbolism “in an Asian cup”? We are concerned to help artists in Asia to present the Christian message and symbols in forms related to the ways people think and feel in their countries. We are concerned that they should be *responsible Christian artists in the Asian context*. That is not an easy matter in the midst of the many confusions and conflicting loyalties of our age. “Responsible” means, on the other hand, that we “respond” and answer to a person or power beyond ourselves; we are responsible *to* someone. “Responsible” also implies that we are responsible for certain actions, things and people; we do not simply please ourselves but are concerned to create something true and good and beautiful; we care for others. If the artist is to feel responsible in this way he must be free to present his vision ‘in terms of his own heritage as an Asian artist. He must be free also to break through the weight of past traditions and challenge his viewers to see new truth in face of the evils and deceptions of the present. Only if the artist is free and responsible in these ways can he have a sense of integrity in his work.

Already these questions have been discussed in the helpful

and illuminating writings of Masao Takenaka, Arno Lehmann and Hans-Ruedi Weber. We are all concerned with the basic aim of bringing “the water of life in an Asian cup”. In this lecture, I wish to do three things to further this aim. First, I wish to point to some bridges of understanding between East and West so that we can share the rich traditions of religious art in various cultures. Secondly, I wish to point to the features of the modern situations which require us to look beyond the old traditions and face new challenges to life and action. Thirdly, I wish to indicate the distinctively Christian features of Christian art, whether in Asia or anywhere else in the world. What is it that gives the artist some Christian angle of vision, “eyes of faith” by which to see afresh his task in this world? In one sense this should be easy to answer – “Of course”, we might say, “It is the Christian’s faith, being a Christian believer, that gives the artist the capacity to produce Christian art.”. But all of us know that the answer is not as easy as that. Not all Christian believers can produce Christian art. And not all the works shown in Professor Takenaka’s book *Christian Art In Asia* are by Christian believers. God works in many ways; and neither religious faith nor art can be produced in a moment like instant coffee – they require disciplined work, insight and searchings of the heart. We need to keep in mind the actual experience of artists who have given a life-time to the task of exploring Christian themes in art. So this is what I am going to do now – look at an undeniably great artist from whose work we can, I believe, learn about Christian art and symbolism in his own context.

### An Artist at work: Rembrandt

I turn to Rembrandt, one of the greatest of all European artists. Does it seem strange to be appealing to an artist from Europe at a consultation on Christian Art in Asia? If so, I should point out that his very distance is a help in giving us perspective. I am a New Zealander and my country is almost as remote as possible from the Netherlands where Rembrandt lived over 300 years ago. About the only point of contact lies in the fact that at the time of Rembrandt, a Dutch explorer, Abel Tasman, set eyes on New Zealand – but he sailed away again! There are no Rembrandt paintings in my country. And even in countries where his works are guarded in art galleries and his greatness as an artist acknowledged, still his great religious insight is too little

appreciated in churches or elsewhere. In his own time, Rembrandt did not conform to the current religious art traditions, Catholic or Protestant. While broadly Protestant in his emphasis on the Bible, his was a very personal biblical Christianity. Throughout his life (1606 – 1669) he painted many pictures and hundreds of etchings on Jewish-Christian themes from the Bible. This in itself was an unusual choice for an artist in 17th Century Holland where the most popular subjects for art were from everyday life. But Rembrandt proceeded in his own way to interpret the themes of the Bible.

Note that I am not suggesting that we should all model our art again on Rembrandt. That would indeed be futile and even fatal for art. What I do say is that through his work we can discern certain marks of Christian art which, from this distance in time, stand out as central guide-lines for Christian artists in any country and period. This is what I find relevant in Rembrandt for our Asian context also. His “angle of vision” is rooted in the biblical-Christian vision at three levels: the sense of being an individual, the sense of belonging to a community, and the sense of the infinite horizon of his life in God.

No doubt everyone has some *sense of identity*, of being someone in particular, an individual amongst others but distinct from them. Rembrandt must have had this to a high degree for he painted almost a hundred portraits of himself. This self-awareness could be partly attributed to the artistic fashions of the Baroque age in which artists portrayed themselves as “open to the world outside . . . sensitive and responsive to higher powers”. Or it might be interpreted as mere vanity, the artist in love with himself and glorifying his own personality. But Rembrandt’s self-portraits show something different. Here is no idealized or beautiful countenance but a very ordinary human face, the face of a real human being. Here is sincerity and honesty. He sees with keen and steady eyes, especially himself in his strengths and his weaknesses. He knows who he is – a man with a personal calling, with an artist’s imagination and a drive to express himself through his art. His last self-portraits especially show quiet loneliness in deeply revealing glimpses of his individual self.

I am sure that this sense of self is an enduring element in Christian art. We know ourselves perhaps only dimly in this life,

but our ultimate faith lies in God knowing us. “O Lord thou hast searched me and known me” prays the Psalmist (Psalm 139). Jesus proclaims that each person is precious in the sight of God, each known as a child who can call to his Father. And each person has the responsibility of being someone and doing things good or bad. The Old Testament prophet Nathan, in a scene which Rembrandt depicted movingly in an etching, rebukes King David himself with a reminder of who he is and the deeds he has done — “Thou art the man” (II Sam 12). This sense of individual identity and responsibility is basic to the Christian understanding of life and of the artist’s calling.

The second level takes the individual to the awareness that he *belongs to* a community, that he participates with others in life’s tasks. This again is true for Rembrandt, unusual individual though he is. After all he was a man of his time and place; a true Dutchman who never moved out of his own country. The United Provinces of the Netherlands had fought courageously for their independence and Rembrandt reflected the virtues of his country in his own courage and outspoken frankness. As an artist he wanted to see the world and human character with a clear and realistic gaze. But Rembrandt’s loyalty to his country did not limit his vision to Holland; he could appreciate the universal human community also. While primarily a Dutch painter he extended his own style by learning from Italian and Flemish painters (such as Caravaggio and Rubens); what was real for him he absorbed and made his own. Again, when he depicted Biblical scenes he recognised that they were set in Palestine in a different time and place and he sought to show this in terms of knowledge available to him. What sort of clothes did King David wear? Rembrandt had seen visitors from the East at the port of Amsterdam and thought that David would have worn a big turban like people from Turkey or India. We may think this is rather quaint and historically inaccurate now; but Rembrandt was making an effort to understand a different age from his own and to feel the common humanity linking us all, ancient and modern, East and West. And when he depicted Jesus preaching forgiveness to the common people he went for his models to the Jewish quarter of Amsterdam; he studied the Jews there to recreate the poor hearers gathered round the central but otherwise humble figure of Jesus. Here again Rembrandt is grounded in the universal message of Christianity that there is “neither Jew nor Greek” —

for all are one in Jesus Christ. All mankind is one family.

This leads on to the third dimension, the *sense of God as the ultimate horizon of our life*. Both the individual and the community have a depth and significance because there is more to life, there is a mystery, a beyond, which sheds light in the darkness. Rembrandt's paintings and etchings suggest something of this mystery; there is more to the individual than the external features can show – the gleam of self-reflection in the eyes and the use of light and dark help to suggest this something more, the infinite beyond our finite world. One image for this is found in the experience of the horizon. As we go on a journey by land or sea the horizon sets a boundary to our field of vision; but as we go further on, the horizon recedes, as if it were infinitely beyond us. This would lead us to frustration and despair if we were unable to find any discernible meaning in our journey. But the experience of the traveller is that as he goes further he also sees further. To vary the image, the lamp or torch which I use to find my way in the dark shows only a short distance in front of me; but as I go on the torch will show me progressively more of the way ahead. These images of the horizon and the traveller express the Christian view of man's destiny in the course of history; we are pilgrims with God as our horizon. But the light by which we travel is a present experience leading us towards that horizon. It is a hope-filled eschatological presence; it is here yet pointing onwards, visible yet indicating the mystery beyond in a quietly magnetic power.

This is how I interpret the presence of Jesus in Rembrandt's pictures. As we saw previously, even when he is shown preaching at the centre of the picture he is not shown as someone sublime or heroic, as coming down to earth in glorious heavenly form, but in the form of a servant. As Visser 't Hooft shows so effectively in his book *Rembrandt and the Gospel*, "his Christ is never without the shadow of the cross". "The painter's language remains indirect", for the reason that the call of God is not one that overpowers people by coming with visible power and glory. God's ambassador comes "in the shape of a man, a simple and suffering man, devoid of beauty". The same holds for Rembrandt's later paintings of the Risen Christ at the Emmaus supper. Christ is shown at the table with a halo gently radiating from his head; but it is as a very ordinary little figure, pale and weary with

stand it. And what then? How is the Christian artist to relate to these other traditions in art and religion? Should we incorporate them by drawing on elements which are acceptable and in harmony with Christian faith? This is the way of Alfred Thomas when he depicts Christ as an Indian holy man seated in the lotus posture or as a bluish-coloured Krishna-type radiant in the Transfiguration. But against this way some answer "No!" and point to the dangers of syncretism; the distinctively Christian message may become submerged in the profusion of Hindu deities and the religion of nature and cosmos where all are one. I shall not enter the controversy here; no doubt these dangers are more real in the experience of some people than of others. A study of the paintings in Professor Takenaka's book certainly shows a wide variety of religious art traditions that artists have drawn on. Bagong in his "Crucifix" uses the traditional Indonesian *wayang* or puppet form to depict tragedy and cosmic triumph over evil. Jamini Roy draws on the bold kalighat style of Bengal in his "Last Supper" and "Nativity". Keisuke Serizawa's "Word Of Eternal Life" shows Christ enthroned in the frontal Byzantine manner of Orthodox Christian icons. But Sadao Watanabe's striking paper stencil of "Jonah" seems to draw on bold styles of Japanese folk art and Zen painting. (Compare the monumental wood-block prints by Munakata in 1939 of "Ten Great Disciples of The Buddha" including the wise Sharihotsu or Sariputra as a cross-eyed saint). Such works excite me and make me enthusiastic about the continuing power of traditional religious art and symbolism today.

But we cannot rest content with the ways of the past, either in art or religion. Some will sing "That old-time religion is good enough for me!" But insofar as that old-time religion is expressed through cultural forms in answer to the ideas and needs of a certain time and place, it is *not* good enough for me. It must be re-experienced and re-expressed in our own time and context. Our 20th century world puts a question-mark against a simple inheriting of past traditions. I can mention three areas in which it does this. First in the area of religion itself we cannot evade the fact today that there are various religions alongside of our own; this is the fact of pluralism. We cannot shut our eyes to other traditions but we must make use of the new opportunities of knowledge to understand these others and, if possible, share something of their insights. (Some of the implications for religious

art have already been made evident). Second, there have been great changes in art styles both in the Western world and in Asia over the past century. Instead of traditionally devout religious art and iconography, artists are free now to choose from a bewildering variety of art styles — realist, impressionist, expressionist, surrealist, cubist, abstract, abstract expressionist, pop-art, op-art, neo-realism and so on. The age of traditional art seems past and some have spoken of the “eclipse of symbolism”. I do not myself believe that this spells the end of religious art and iconography. In the West such artists as Barlach, Brancusi, Henry Moore and Robert Pillods show that modern art can be a vehicle for ancient symbolism and religious themes. The same will hold for the Asian context. This does not mean that religious art can breathe comfortably again in a secure and privileged position. In an age of mass communication there are varied popular art forms which we must pay attention to — films, journals and posters, popular “bazaar prints” and inspirational pictures, and also the Christmas and Easter greeting cards which can convey Christian themes to a wide audience. The third area, in conclusion, is one where we are challenged by the modern situation to exercise responsibility for our society. The upheavals caused by war, political changes, population growth, industry and urbanization — all of these create new problems where there is great human need. If religion has a conscience it must not ignore the problems of human suffering, but go on seeking answers to disease, poverty, illiteracy, exploitation, unemployment and overcrowding. The Gospel of Jesus came first as “good news” of the Kingdom of God, but it was good news in action, a warfare against the kingdom of evil in spiritual and physical forms alike. Christian art cannot therefore avoid taking very seriously the needs of the world in which Jesus proclaims the Gospel. How to do this effectively is a question involving a wide range of popular arts, as we have mentioned. The cover of the *Asia Youth Mission* booklet from Hong Kong in May 1977 shows hands of needy people reaching out in hope and the title speaks of “Asian suffering and hope”. There is a challenge to social realism as an integral concern of a responsible Christian artist.

Where does “social realism” leave the area of art and religion to become merely slogans, advertising and ideology? That question too must be faced. I can here offer once again the basic appeal

to Christian responsibility which involves individual identity, community belonging and horizon of God with us in Jesus.

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## My People and Their Art

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Once the Dutch said: the Indonesian is the gentlest (= and the softest) man on earth. They must have changed their minds after their experience during the revolution in 1945 and after that. We are indeed very polite. We smile easily, we are fond of laughter and know the difference between humour and a common joke. Our culture indicates how to behave towards elder people, friends or others in society. Our Javanese language has many ways of the finest order to express our attitude towards others according to our own place in the social order.

We never learned: take too much and give too little, because we believe that life begins after death. It will be heaven or hell hereafter.

We knew gotong royong (= socialisme a la Indonesia) already at the time of Queen Shima, more than 1200 years ago. The society in the village is not a dead body. It is a living family system. The chiefs (lurah) of all villages of Indonesia are more or less related to each other. This is one reason why it was hard for the Dutch to corner us in the villages during the revolution. And this relative-system is especially strong in the villages. These simple villagers always felt one with us who fought for our Republic. There is an old Javanese saying which characterizes everything: dudu sanak, dudu kadang nek mati melu kelangan, which means: even if there is no relationship or the slightest family bloodstring, we miss him if he dies. Maybe this is the hidden power which made us survive as a nation in spite of the 350 years of colonization. We accept life as a consequence of a togetherness and a belonging to each other.

We are not a resentful nation. As a proof, you just look around in Indonesia. Everywhere you will meet foreigners, and many of them are Dutch, walking around as tourists or having their very well-paid jobs here, living in very nice areas, feeling free and happy to go to any place without being afraid of attacks of any kind by those who still remember how we fought them in 1945, even if they had been soldiers at that time. We are a peace-loving nation. We smile at every one, especially at you, my friends. I welcome you from the bottom of my heart and I hope you will like my country in spite of all our short-comings.

Let me try to give you a glance at our culture and art. By lack of good communication and economical differences between the 3000 islands of Indonesia, historically and geographically, our art and culture are inevitably different. Accurately it was not only the Hindu who influenced our culture and history, but the Mongolian and Chinese elements also left their deep marks in our physical and spiritual life. The influence of Islam, still enormously perceptible now, had made great changes during these 400 years, in our ancient way of thinking and appreciating our own art which we inherited from our great artists.

There are not only economic differences among the islands of Indonesia, but also differences in the stage of aristocracy. In Java, for instance, we find highly advanced aristocracy. I notice that the more advanced the aristocracy, the more complicated many things become but, striking too, the more delicious the food and the more calculated the dresses and way of moving in and around the courts (kraton). The dances in the palaces (kraton) in Java, for instance, have evolved from erotic to non-erotic expression. Beauty is not a worldly, but a heavenly, experience. It is a sin to look at the audience if you dance. You just have to look down at a certain point without being aware of anybody watching you.

In spite of our highly developed aristocracy, our capacity in trading and sea-faring, we were not the bringers of modern time into our country. I thought that modern-time meant Renaissance. In fact it was Christian culture. When Picodella Mirandola finished his 900 theses to be discussed, it was not meant for Europe and Westerns only, but for all men. This was a great revolution every Christian had to shout about. This new idea was greater than the

knowledge of fire in the dark memory of men. It gave light and clearness to mankind on all the spots of the compass. It came even on our spot in this hemisphere, brought by the Dutch. Not in peace and understanding, but, alas, by force.

We were colonized and the whole society was brought under the yoke of Dutch supervision. Our aristocracy was only a name, because the real ones were the Dutch. So at that time there were only two kinds of men: the Settlers (Dutch) and the Inlanders (Dutch word for aborigines). This word "inlander" became a malediction for us Indonesians but, on the other hand, there was a "sunny side" too. For the Dutch we were all the same; aristocracy or not, we were all "inlanders" and this made us start feeling as one nation, united in the same fate. The distance between the aristocracy and the common people diminished. We felt united and great because we knew that our country was large and we were so many.

This was in theory; what was the reality? Poverty among all our countrymen; and it was not possible, of course, to create a normal economic atmosphere which was necessary for further development of culture and art. What we could do was to preserve it as well as possible. Our love for tradition was, fortunately, strong enough to fill celebrations and religious events with beautiful traditional dances, songs and music, drama, literature and also happy laughter. It must be noted that all the small villages and the society in the environment of the sultanates were, together, one huge storage of our art and culture. We use literature, for instance, as reading classics in a chanting way. In Java we sing at night to stay awake watching over new-born babies, and over relatives or friends who have just passed away.

In Minangkabau (West Sumatra) they use verse for proposing marriage and also for wedding ceremonies. Even on common occasions people talk in rhymes and verses not only with existing memorized poems, but also on-the-spot-created ones adjusted to the circumstances of the moment.

Dr Moh. Hatta, our first vice-president and one of the proclaimators of the Republic, was born in this poem-lovers, part of Indonesia. And these country-men of mine proved to be not only naturally talented with literature – but fighting, trading and even

delicious cooking are their natural skills too. They are, as I observed, a little more chauvinistic than Indonesians from other parts of our country. They have a deep love for their mothers. You will find the word "Bundokanduang" in nearly every sentence they sing or write, specially when they are not in their "homeland" (Minangkabau). They are also very devoted Moslems. But we got die-hard politicians and highly cultivated, learned men from this part of Indonesia. Together with their neighbours from Tapanuli and Aceh, they gave the Dutch many hard blows in their colonial policy up until 1908. That is why they were not allowed to enter the Dutch colonial army.

We are of many tribes, each with its own language and culture, but since 1928 our united language is bahasa-Indonesia. This new democratic vehicle grew fast from Malayan origin to modern Indonesian. It took many words and comprehensions from local sources and abroad to enrich its vocabulary. Our language is still growing and we Indonesians are trying our utmost to speak our own language as perfectly as possible. As a result our language has been used as the official language at the International Teacher's Conference in July 1978 in Jakarta, and at the International Congress of World Evangelisation in Lausanne (Switzerland) 1975.

In this relatively short time, about 50 years (1928–1978), Indonesia has brought forth poets and writers of international fame, such as Chairil Anwar, the brothers Sanoesi and Armijn Pane, Takdir Alisyahbana, Rosihan Anwar, Rendra and others. Rendra, our young poet, with his aggressive humanistic, and demonstrative character, uses poetry not only as a written expression but also as a weapon for his ideas. He is loved by the younger generation and the students. They come to listen to him anywhere, even if they have to pay for it. Dr Teeuw (Holland) an expert in bahasa-Indonesia and famous literator, acknowledged once in Jogjakarta that Rendra is the man who switched poetry into oratory. That is a new facet in world literature.

Coming to drama: in Java we have many kinds; for instance, the wayang-orang, a traditional "opera-ballet". Besides that we have the more modern stage-art, called "KETOPRAK", which is very much loved by the people. It is also a kind of opera-ballet, but more democratic; more simple in dance, figuring, music and

dialogue. This Ketoprak was created at about the same time as the Kebyar by Mario in Bali. The dialogue of the Ketoprak reflects the daily problems of life and the many historical themes used remind us of the greatness of our past. That is why everybody, especially the common people, like it very much because it touches the tender strings in them. Most of the players are talented folk-artists who move and act on the stage very naturally and realistically without any theatrical pomposity, much better than many Indonesian movie stars. Their creativity does not stretch only to acting or bizarre dressing, but their linguistic capacity has influenced the spoken language of Jogjakarta and surroundings. Sarpin and Basio are very famous in the Ketoprak world. This is the influence of the Ketoprak in Central Java.

On the contrary, the schooled Indonesian-speaking generation in the big cities are influenced in their way of expressing by the film, stage, music and songs which come from abroad. It is a copy of the West, but I never doubt our creativity in bringing influences into a new form of our own. We really never leave things untouched or pure. Even religions were not out of our range.

A few days ago I saw on the television screen a new creation of some kind of opera-performances in the local language by students from Bandung. It was very beautiful. I hope that we can show you better, new-original things with our own colours and conceptions. But please, my friends, do not entertain the hopes of performances of the old beauty only. It shall be a new one, according to new circumstances. Our new identity: Modern Indonesia!

In music, literature, dance and drama we still find clear outlines of our originality and style; but not in painting, because after the annihilation of Majapahit 400 years ago, the art of painting and plastic art was totally wiped from our life. Except on one little spot: this very island of Bali. It was preserved by Hinduism, this last stronghold of our old faith. There are written Chinese records, or folkstories by word of mouth, proofs of the existence of the art of painting in our history, but not a single painting was left. The only documents we have are the coloured Bali drawings on rectangular cloths for temples and princely bedsteads.

We, painters of PERSAGI (-persatuan ahli<sup>2</sup> gambar Indonesia) established in Jakarta in 1937, did not follow the line of Bali, but adjusted to circumstances had to use a modern tool from the West. This Western technique was, after all, useful and satisfying and more easily understood by all layers of the society. Even by the Moslems. At that time we had to keep telling ourselves about life, like a drummer in wartime. There was no time to quarrel about Indonesian or non-Indonesian style. We had to work directly together with our nationalists. From the first days of our revolution until the very last, we not only used guns as our weapons, but also our brush. And these tools are ours too.

No one has the right to say we have no art of painting. We used it to build our Republic. This new technique has made history and besides, who would prevent us from overplanting this seed from the West into our own soil? But meanwhile we are still searching for our own expression and identity. The new batik art in painting is one of our attempts and the phenomena of Affandi is a historical fact. We hope that now we have our own Republic and are in far more favourable circumstances, we still have the creativity to create new things of beauty, better than our ancestors.

What you will see or hear in Bali, Java, or elsewhere in Indonesia, such as dances, music, temples, carved stone gates, artistic roofs, slender fishing boats along the shore, and other beautiful things, are honestly speaking the creations of our ancestors. Not ours! Do not blame us, my friends, that in many things we have not yet reached what we have been aiming for during 33 years of independence. We still have so much to do and so much to learn at one time. Physically we are free, but mentally not yet completely free, and great works depend on being mentally free.

This is the reason why I am so glad to see this Christian Artists Conference of Asia being held in Bali. Mystically speaking, it cannot be without the Will of God that we Christian artists of Asia are brought together now in this paradise of the world to discuss a heavenly theme "The Lord's prayer". Christianity means practising the moral of the Bible. To me it means being involved with the struggle of men for a better life in this world of sins. And it is also a chance for all of us to make the strongest

efforts to expel our bad burdens each moment from our life.

So there is hope for us Indonesians to be free, not only physically, but also mentally.

Painting is creating, relieving, sublimating, correcting . . .  
Let us make many works for God and for all mankind.

Our Father in Heaven

Give us clarity in our vision

Give us Your intuition through ours for You

Give us Your blessing over this Conference, enlarging our ideas in Your Name, for all Asians and all men. Amen



*Top: "THE LAST SUPPER" painted in traditional Balinese art form by Ketut Lasia.  
Below: The Bali Protestant Church is experimenting with new liturgical forms. Here  
the offering is presented with the traditional Balinese offering dance.*

# The Lord's Prayer — Vertical Dimension

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To me the Lord's Prayer cannot be *said* — it has to be *spoken*. For it is undoubtedly the most fundamental yet all-encompassing human document ever made.

## Hallowed Be Thy Name — Thy Kingdom Come, Thy Will Be Done

These three assertions of faith, hope and love symbolise the vertical aspect of our relationship with God. To me they also constitute the vertical post of the Cross and the descending form of God to man. The horizontal aspect of the three later statements of the Lord's Prayer constitute the horizontal bar of the cross. Thus a meeting point is created. This is the centre, the central point, the origin, the seat of the deity, the centre of energy, the source of power.

## Hallowed Be Thy Name

There is joy and exhilaration in that exclamation. We believe and we *know* our Father is in heaven, so we cry — Bless His name. Here is recognition, identification and, above all, abundant faith and joy. It is a thrilling and significant cry — it is the moment of the sun — it is there. So, overwhelmed with joy and gratitude we call for a blessing on the source of all blessing. We return the offering of love he has poured down upon us.

When I was asked to look after the vertical aspect of the Lord's prayer, I feared there was a dreadful mistake somewhere. For I know little of theology. I have always been very afraid of the word "theology" and decided a long time ago that it was for people with brains. But of one gift I am proud, and that is an unshakeable faith I have in God. My parents and my only brother

had this same deep commitment and I witnessed how it saw them through many moments of despair.

I am going to share a few thoughts with you as an artist, and also as a Christian artist. Because I believe that the glimpses beyond the human compass which many artists have, and the visions and the dreams, come from an awareness of the ever-renewing source of creative energy which we know in God.

To us who paint and sculpt, form and colour and symbols are of prime importance. Everything that is visual has a greater depth of significance and importance to us, and our understanding of these determines our expression and interpretation. We are here together for a purpose through the prophetic vision of Professor Takenaka and the willing and able support of Rev O'Grady and the Christian Conference of Asia.

With the new challenges the church in recently freed countries in Asia are facing, there is a most urgent need for an authentic Asian expression in all our art forms — in our painting, sculpture, architecture, music, writing and in the dance form. We need very urgently a new idiom and a new identity in our churches. Our churches are full of ineffective and incongruous design, and these often create a feeling of separation. With the Buddhists and the Hindus the problem does not arise, for the moods and gestures in their artistic expression are authentic and, therefore, acceptable.

The pale Gothic saints, the trembling Baroque angels and the Romanesque or Anglo-Saxon heavenly hosts and Holy Families have neither relevance nor meaning for us. The space and volume characteristic of European painting, the scientific techniques of contrast in light and colour and perspective are, in many ways, foreign to our viewing.

We have so many powerful symbols of our own and as Asian Christian artists we understand each other more deeply because our cultural backgrounds are often similar. So in our meeting, our sharing and exchange at this time, there will no doubt be many seeds sown in the hearts of those of us here. And it is our hope that somewhere, in some place — in many places, a new expression and a new interpretation will appear.

In our Asian tradition, the idea of the Mandala — the Centre and the Circle — is to me one of the most powerful and significant symbols. The Centre, the Source, the seat of God. Around Him is the square — the world of people — and around the square the radiating, encompassing, renewing endless circle of the Cosmos.

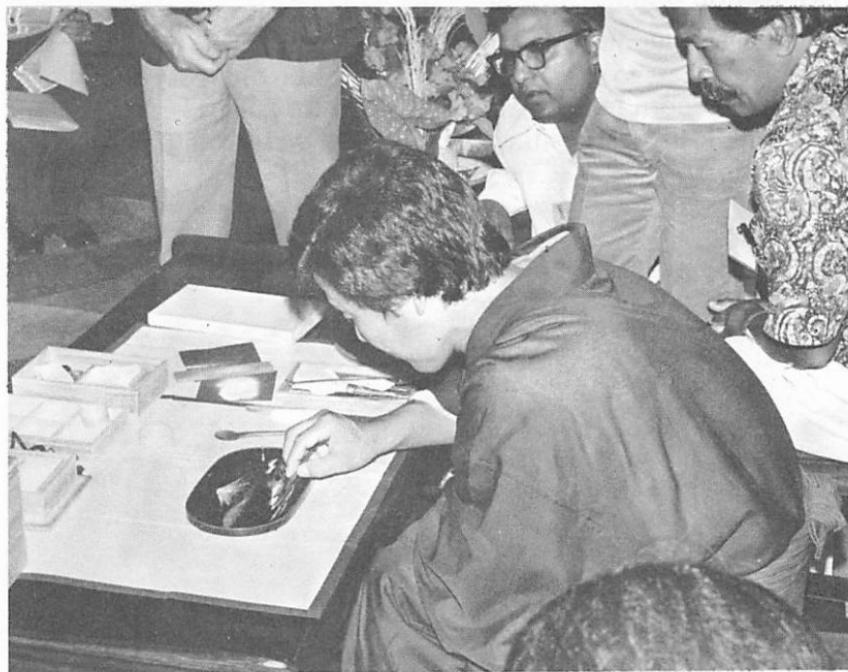
Let me take you back again to the Centre, the seat of God, the source of all energy; and also the point at which the horizontal human line and the vertical divine line meet.

### **Thy Kingdom Come**

There is a vibrant hope in this prayer — the hope that God's power and presence will surround us. And when we say "Thy Kingdom Come" we are not praying for ourselves alone. It is a corporate prayer — a prayer that asks for the love and understanding and compassion of God for all the peoples of the earth.

### **Thy Will Be Done**

This is the most beautiful and tender offering of submission and love. The ego is obliterated, and here is the prayer of a soul reborn — reborn in faith, in hope and in love. This is the moment when the lotus reaches the surface of the water and unfolds itself to the sun.



Top: Korean artist Hong Chong-Myung explains his painting "CELEBRATION".  
Below: Katsuhiko Ichikawa of Japan, a master at the ancient art of making pictures from white sand on a black laquer tray.

# The Kingdom, The Power and The Glory

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## A Note on the Final Affirmation:

“For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, for ever” (Matthew 6:13).

This final affirmation in the Lord’s Prayer is in a doxological form. In the oldest texts (manuscripts) of the Gospel according to Matthew, there is no such affirmation. Similarly, there is no such doxology found in the shorter form of the Lord’s Prayer in the Gospel according to Luke. It is likely that the addition was made in the second century.

According to a Jewish custom, it was a common thing for one person only to recite a prayer in a congregation, after which the whole congregation responded with the word “amen” or with a doxology. This form of doxology that we find as a final affirmation in the Lord’s Prayer reminds us of that found in I Chronicles 29:11 which reads:

“Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is Thine; Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and Thou art exalted as head above all.”

We find in the New Testament, many similar doxologies, such as found in Luke 2:14, 19:38, II Timothy 4:18, Revelation 1:6, 4:11, 11:15 and 12:10.

In the final affirmation of the Lord’s Prayer, the kingdom of God is of primary importance, while the glory and the power are only the consequences or the manifestations of that kingdom. When the heaven and the earth have been made new, then what

is affirmed in this prayer will become a reality.

The kingdom of God means that it is God who is the king. It is He who rules, whose wishes are fulfilled, whose power permeates and whose glory is manifest. In the kingdom of God, the kingship of God is recognized.

Unlike the human power which tends to be destructive, the power of God is a power which creates. It is full of love, not hatred. In the beginning, the power of God is manifested in the creation of the universe and in the creation of mankind. His power is shown in the form of love – of protection – of sustenance. The power of God is a power of loyalty, of faithfulness and of salvation.

The glory of God is a glory which is manifested in the obedience of His people – His creation. God is glorified as Creator, a Giver of life, and a Protector, whose triumph over evil – the power of destruction – is evident.

For ever, means eternal. It never ends. The kingship of God is from eternity to eternity; the power of God is endless; His glory is of infinite duration.

When we ourselves pray, that “for Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory for ever,” – what are we praying? What are we affirming? Do we affirm it only in our prayers, through words? Or do we affirm it in our daily life? How do we affirm it beyond mere words? Can we express this affirmation in *art forms*? And in the art of daily life?

A prayer is a request. It is, at the same time, also an affirmation. A request – not a demand – which is characterized by hope. And the hope which is affirmed. This affirmation of hope invokes us – those who pray – to make all effort to bring forth our affirmation, and thus our hope, into reality. This means, that we open ourselves for God’s action.

## Excerpt from The Closing Service . . .

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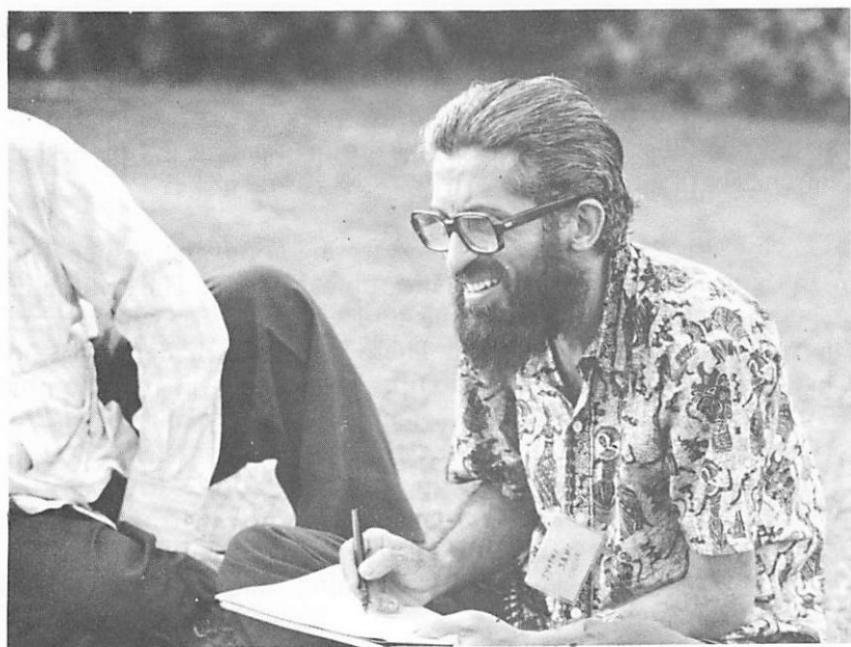
I have the feeling that something new is emerging.

Take the church in Indonesia. The gospel came to us in the Protestant form, and it was, for us, a great moment of renewal and a correction of many things which were wrong. But Protestantism primarily concentrates on the mind, and emphasises a religion of theology. Historically, it has brought about and stimulated economic development and its contributions, both economic and intellectual, are most important.

But in that process it neglected some other things. In Indonesia when Protestantism arose it destroyed sculpture. There was a tendency to despise the culture because art was related to the old religions. There is still a large group of people in Indonesian churches with a bias against art.

Now there is beginning a new feeling about the gospel. The Word is becoming incarnate in the fulness of life. The church in Asia is often a minority in the midst of cultures which draw their inspiration from religion. There is a great challenge to the Christian to become aware of culture. Indeed, this may be our distinctive Asian contribution to ecumenical Christianity.

If we can help to bring questions of culture towards the centre of the ecumenical movement, then we will have begun something which, in God's mystery, will be a great thing for the church in Asia, and will bring something unique to the world ecumenical movement.



*Top: An oil painting "OUR FATHER" and artist Nyoman Darsane.  
Below: Indian artist Jyothi Sahi.*

## Why Has Ikebana Become So Popular in Japan?

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When we trace Ikebana to its origin we can find an important encounter between man and nature. From ancient times people in Japan have had a religious feeling towards nature and plants, regarding them as sacred things. Being influenced by Buddhism and Shintoism they worshipped their gods and Buddha in their houses and offered sacred plants before them.

As you probably know, Kyoto was the capital city of Japan for about 1,000 years before Tokyo. During this long period, in accordance with the development of architecture, flowers were loved by various classes of people from the aristocrats to ordinary people, as a kind of interior decoration. And it gradually developed as the traditional art of Ikebana as we have it now.

In Japan the changes of four seasons are so remarkable that people are favoured by the beautiful scenery of nature. The deep relation with nature made it possible for the people to develop traditional culture such as Japanese poems called Waka or Haiku, tea ceremony, ikebana, etc. There are many different types of beauty in its element. Japanese have loved quiet beauty that they call "wabi" and "sabi" as well as bright and magnificent beauties. Wabi and sabi are hard to understand, and are even harder to translate into English, but they are such beauties as we find in an old stone covered with moss. Relation between man and nature is deep all over the world I believe, but particularly in Japan people have expressed their feeling of joy and sorrow through nature and flowers. We love quiet, elegant, graceful beauty which we see in dying flowers or in things passing away. Religious feeling and appreciation of beauty in nature became united, and that made it possible for Japanese people to develop Ikebana.

## Ikebana means to give life to flowers

We pick the flowers in the mountains and fields, or in the garden. But we do not throw them into the vase as they are. We arrange them carefully wishing to give "life" to them. We wish to create the different beauty of the flower by adding our warm heart to the natural beauty of nature.

On Sunday I arrange flowers for worship service according to the church calendar on such occasions as Christmas, Easter and Pentecost. As Matthew chapter 6 tells us, everything is created by God and He cares for the creatures, even the grass of the field that exists today and is thrown into the furnace tomorrow. As I come to know more and more about flowers, I feel more deeply that this passage is true. Works of Ikebana do not remain long as other works of paintings or sculptures do, but I will treasure the momentary encounter with flowers, and will try to do my best in giving them the most beautiful life with all my heart.



Japanese flower arranger Yukiko KAMIYA, well-known writer and teacher portrays Christian themes in flowers. Prepares a display for "Thy is the Kingdom".

## Dhyana Pura Statement

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As Asian Christian artists we have met together on the island of Bali to discuss our work and seek signs for the future. It has been, for many of us, a moment of discovery as we have found a new and wider community of Christian artists struggling with the same questions and difficulties.

We express our thanks to the Christian Conference of Asia for making this gathering possible, and to our Balinese hosts for their warm friendship and celebration of life which we have shared.

This is, for our region, an important moment in history. With many new challenges facing the recently-independent countries of Asia, there is a most urgent need for an authentic Asian expression in all our art forms — in our painting, sculpture, architecture, music, writing and in dance.

In the churches many have begun the critical search for a new idiom and a new identity. Church buildings are full of ineffective and incongruous designs, and these perpetuate the feeling of separation of the church from the people. "Gothic saints, trembling Baroque angels and the Romanesque or Anglo-Saxon heavenly hosts and holy families" once spoke vividly to the people and are still objects of devotion to many Western people, but they have little relevance or meaning to most Asians. Western art forms can be good in their own setting, but we need to do things in our own setting.

We grope towards an Asian community which is faithful to our roots and holds the promise of truth.

## **The Christian Artist**

As Christian artists we see ourselves as contributing to the wider search for an authentic Asian identity.

To do this we must first be good artists, masters of our own techniques, and subject to the disciplines and standards by which all artists are measured.

We rejoice to know that many Asian artists who are not professing Christians have been attracted by Biblical themes, especially the person of Christ, and have sought to express these themes in their work. The issue of what constitutes a "Christian" art or who can be called a "Christian" artist cannot be decisively answered, but we will continue to explore the implications of this question without placing too many dogmatic limitations on our discussion.

We accept the moral obligation to portray through our art the wider ethical questions posed by modern society. Our art must not be removed from the suffering of the masses of Asia. The language of our art must be the language of the people.

## **Encouragement of Art**

Within each nation the search for Christian authenticity needs the special contribution which artists can provide. As the artists draw their inspiration from the lives and experiences of the people, so they provide a mirror by which the church can be led to a deeper understanding of its role.

We encourage the church in every place to make greater use of the artists in their congregation in order that Christian concepts may be a channel to enrich the existing cultures. Local churches will themselves need to be educated to appreciate good Christian art.

Especially should the church encourage, rather than subdue, talented young artists in the churches. Support such as the offering of scholarships, provision of outlets for work, apprenticeships, provision of materials and similar actions are required. Prizes and exhibitions will be an incentive.

The church should encourage artists to use the natural environment of the people by using indigenous material, architecture, furniture etc., and thus further their liberation from colonial bondage, and foster the creation of an authentic cultural expression of Christian faith in the Asian context.

## Towards the Future

We see the need to develop the network of Christian artists which has begun at Bali, and therefore resolve as follows:

### A) Association of Christian Artists in Asia

We, the undersigned, hereby resolve to enter into a voluntary Association to be known as the "Association of Christian Artists in Asia" with the following objectives:

1. To promote the development of Christian art in the churches in Asia.
2. To coordinate the activities of those individuals and groups in the Asian region who are working on indigenous Christian art forms.
3. To provide a means of communication and information to Asian Christian artists.

The membership of this Association shall comprise —

- a) working Christian artists
- b) national and regional associations of Christian art.

The Association of Christian Artists in Asia (ACAA) shall also offer associate membership to those who are not artists but who subscribe to the general aims of the Association.

We further appoint the following persons —

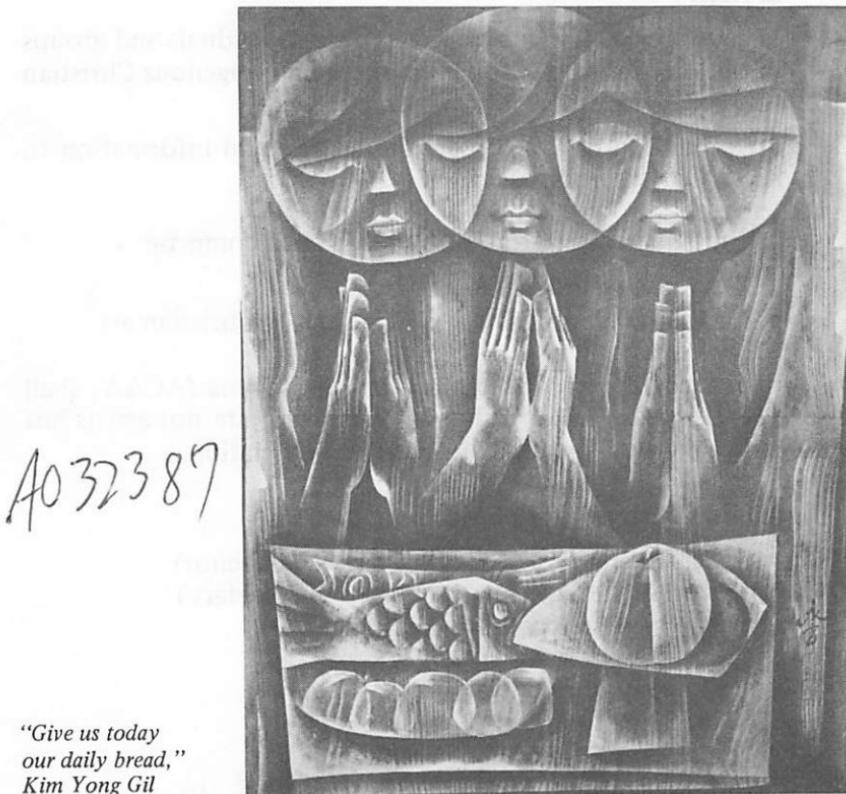
Dr Takenaka, Masao	(Convenor)
Rev O'Grady, Ron	(Secretary)
Mr Bagong, Kussudiardja	
Mr Hong, Chong Myung	
Miss Jayasuriya, Nalini	
Mr Sahi, Jyothi	
Mr Saprid, Solomon	

to act as an interim Board of Directors with power to —

- a) prepare a draft constitution
- b) seek budgetary support
- c) make interim staff arrangements
- d) fix membership fees
- e) convene the first General Meeting (which may be by post) to take place approximately twelve months from this date.

(Signed by the participants.)

B) As a further step in this process, a small collection of good quality Asian art should be collected, based on some of the works presented at Bali, and others chosen by invitation, to tour major cities in Asia. In each place exhibitions may be held in association with works from prominent local Christian artists. At such gatherings, support may be solicited for the establishment of national associations.



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CLAREMONT, CALIF.

# Participants

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<b>Australia:</b>	<b>Very Rev. John Bayton</b>	<b>Anglican Dean Painter</b>
	<b>Mr Gaumana Gauwrrain</b>	<b>Pastor, Artist</b>
	<b>Ms Miriam Rose Ungunmerr</b>	<b>Arts and Crafts Consultant. Artist</b>
<b>Bangladesh:</b>	<b>Mr Nikhil Halder</b>	<b>Educator Painter</b>
<b>Hong Kong</b>	<b>Ms Rita Choy Ng</b>	<b>Teacher Painter</b>
<b>India:</b>	<b>Mr Pritam J Airan</b>	<b>Civil Servant. Painter</b>
	<b>Mr Suthir Bairagi</b>	<b>Painter</b>
	<b>Mr Jyothi Sahi</b>	<b>Painter</b>
	<b>Mr Frank Wesley</b>	<b>Painter</b>
<b>Indonesia:</b>	<b>Mr Bagong Kussudiardja</b>	<b>Director of Art Centre. Artist</b>
	<b>Mr Njoman Darsane</b>	<b>Painter</b>
	<b>Mr Ketut Lasia</b>	<b>Painter</b>

	<b>Dr Wayan Mastra</b>	Theologian
	<b>Dr Judo Poerwowidagdo</b>	Director of Educational Research Centre.
	<b>Mr Sudjojono</b>	Theologian Painter
<b>Japan:</b>	<b>Mr Katsuhiko Ichikawa</b>	Director of Traditional Arts
	<b>Ms Yukiko Kamiya</b>	Ikebana Specialist
	<b>Mr Yasua Ueno</b>	Art Professor. Painter
	<b>Mr Sadao Watanabe</b>	Printmaker
<b>Korea:</b>	<b>Mr Hong Chong Myung</b>	Director of Fine Arts Artist
	<b>Mr Kim Yong Gil</b>	Artist
	<b>Ms Yang Sup Lee</b>	Professor of Applied Art. Printmaker
<b>New Zealand:</b>	<b>Rev Colin Jamieson</b>	Methodist Minister. Painter
	<b>Dr Albert Moore</b>	Professor of Religious Studies. Theologian
	<b>Rev Te Napi Waaka</b>	Methodist Minister. Woodcarver
<b>Pakistan:</b>	<b>Mr Joseph Scott</b>	Teacher Painter
<b>Philippines:</b>	<b>Ms Adiel Arevalo</b>	Curator Printmaker
	<b>Mr Solomon Saprid</b>	Sculptor
<b>Singapore:</b>	<b>Brother Joseph McNally</b>	Teacher Sculptor

Sri Lanka:	Mr Yasantha Boange Ms Nalini Jayasuriya Mr Paul Navaratne	Woodcarver Painter Woodcarver
Thailand:	Mr Damrong Wong-Uparaj Mr Viboon Leesuwan	Lecturer in Art. Painter Teacher Printmaker
Guests	Dr T B Simatupang Mr Gerhard Nainggolan Mrs Takenaka Mrs Ueno Mr Tatsuo Watanabe	President, Indonesian Council of Churches. Literature, BPK, Indonesia Japan Japan Japan
Staff	Dr Masao Takenaka Rev Ron O'Grady Rev Ketut Ayub Ms Henriette Katoppo Ms Alison O'Grady	Consultation Moderator (Japan) Consultation Secretary (Singapore) Director, Dhyana Pura (Bali, Indonesia) Translator (Indonesia) Secretary (Singapore)
Associated Staff	Mr Esdras Giddy Mr John Leek Mr Richard Mason Mr Horatius Kwok	Sound Recording (Australia) Cinematographer (Australia) Cine-Producer (Australia) Audio-Visual (Hong Kong)



*Left: Conference Moderator – Dr Masao Takenaka.*

*Below: Conference proceedings captured on film for television by John Leek.*



To

The Association of Christian Artists in Asia  
CCA, 480 Lorong 2,  
Toa Payoh,  
Singapore 12

I/We wish to apply for membership in the Association of Christian Artists in Asia

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Category of Membership:  
(Ordinary or Associate) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

**Note:** Ordinary membership is open to all working artists in Asia or to national or regional organisations who have a professional interest in the arts. Associate membership is open to any interested persons.

In the first year membership of the Association is free. The fees for subsequent years will be decided by the Association Directors in July 1979.